

SILVERLEAF NIGHTSHADE

Solanum elaeagnifolium Cav.

plant symbol = SOEL

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches (TX)
Technical Office and the National Plant Data Center

Alternate Names



Brother Alfred Brousseau
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whiteweed, trompillo, white horsenettle

Uses

Caution: Poisonous plant. Like most plants in the nightshade genus, silver-leaf nightshade is poisonous to cattle, but rarely consumed. *Solanum* is a huge genus with 1,200-1,800 species worldwide, but only 20 are found in Texas (all poisonous). The green portions of its domestic cousin, the potato, are also poisonous. Wildlife value of this plant is minimal.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

General: Nightshade Family (Solanaceae). *Solanum elaeagnifolium*, is a deep-rooted, native perennial, which rarely reaches a height of more than 3 feet. Silver-leaf nightshade gets its name from the short, white or silvery pubescence (hairs or fuzz) on the leaves and stems. This plant is found throughout Texas. Plants growing in humid regions do not

normally have spines or prickles, while those found in arid regions are more commonly prickly. Leaves are alternate and entire. Leaf margins are normally wavy. Flowers are typical of the nightshade family (potatoes, peppers, and tomatoes). *Solanum* is the genus of the domestic potato.

Solanum dimidiatum (western horse-nettle) is somewhat similar, but does not have the velvety appearance. Vegetatively, *Croton capitatus* (wooly croton, doveweed, goatweed), resembles silverleaf nightshade, though *Croton* is never armed. Unlike nightshade, *Croton* is very intolerant of shade.

Distribution

This species is known from Washington and California to Maryland and Florida. For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

Adaptation: Silver-leaf nightshade is found on upland sites and appears to prefer loamy, droughty soils, but is found on virtually all soil types, except for deep sands. It is shade tolerant, becoming quite abundant under trees and beside farm buildings. Because the plant is poisonous and avoided by livestock, it tends to become more prevalent in overgrazed areas.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Please check the Vendor Database, expected to be on-line through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking on Plant Materials. These plant materials are readily available from commercial sources.

References

Davis, L. 2000. *Texas plant fact sheet: Solanum elaeagnifolium*. USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches Technical Office #2, Nacogdoches, Texas.

USDA, NRCS 2000. *The PLANTS database*. <<http://plants.usda.gov>>. 001206. National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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